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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART CELEBRATES 2,500TH CONCERT ON JUNE 13, 2004



Jorge Mester, guest conductor  
June 13, 2004

Washington, DC - The National Gallery of Art celebrates its 2,500th concert on June 13, 2004, in the East Building Atrium. This year marks the 62nd season of free Sunday concerts at the Gallery. Musicians who have performed over the years include such luminaries as Claudio Arrau (1944), Eugene Istomin (1949), Earl Wild (1943-1945, and 2001), Virgil Fox (1943-1945), Bernard Greenhouse (1943-1945), Menachem Pressler (1954, 1991, and 2000), George Shearing (1987, 1991, and 1992), and Philippe Entremont (1953 and 2004).

On June 13, the National Gallery Orchestra performs music by Stravinsky, Ravel, Ginastera, and Silvestre Revueltas, under the direction of guest conductor Jorge Mester, music director of the Pasadena Symphony. The concert is presented in honor

of the exhibitions **Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya** and **The Cubist Paintings of Diego Rivera: Memory, Politics, Place**, on view in the East Building through July 25. Visit [/programs/music/index.shtm](http://www.nga.gov/programs/music/index.shtm) (<http://www.nga.gov/programs/music/index.shtm>) for more information on the Gallery's Sunday concert series.

## **HISTORY OF THE GALLERY CONCERTS**

Concerts at the National Gallery began during World War II, when the first director of the Gallery, David E. Finley, kept the building open on Sunday nights to accommodate the many armed forces personnel who were in Washington at the time. Further encouragement was provided by Frances Nash Watson, a prominent Washingtonian and concert pianist; Mary Howe, a Washington composer; and Mrs. Dorothy Godfrey, a supporter and friend of Findley. The first concert was performed by the United States Navy's School of Music Chorus on December 7, 1942.

Richard Bales, the Gallery's first assistant to the director for music, whose tenure lasted 42 years, instituted the Gallery's American Music Festival, a series of concerts devoted exclusively to music by American composers. The custom continues on an annual basis and is the longest-running festival of its kind in existence. Under Bales' supervision, live broadcast of the concerts was initiated in 1950 and continued until 1992. Bales conducted his first concert in the Gallery in July 1943. He organized thousands of performances, some of which contained his own compositions, and recorded three of his cantatas with the National Gallery Orchestra: *The Union*, *The Confederacy*, and *The Republic*.

From 1985 to 2003, concerts at the National Gallery were under the direction of George Manos. A concert pianist as well as a conductor, Manos appeared as concerto soloist with the Gallery orchestra and accompanied some of the guest artists in recital. He instituted jazz concerts in the context of the American Music Festival and hosted such jazz greats as George Shearing, Dizzie Gillespie, the Modern Jazz Quartet, Ramsey Lewis, Diane Schorr, Billy Taylor, and Maynard Ferguson.

Since November 2003 the concerts have been directed by Stephen Ackert, who was named head of the music department after 16 years as the Gallery's music program

specialist. His lectures and Gallery talks on the crosscurrents between art and music in various periods and cultures are a regular feature of the Gallery's educational offerings. He looks forward to developing projects that increase and enhance the opportunities for Gallery visitors to experience great art and great music concurrently.

Broadcasts of music from National Gallery concerts can currently be heard on National Public Radio. Since the mid-1960s, the concerts at the Gallery have been supported by funds bequeathed by William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin. Other significant funders include the Mellon Foundation, the Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation.

## **THE NATIONAL GALLERY ORCHESTRA**

In its first years, the National Gallery Orchestra consisted of approximately 25 players who were also members of the National Symphony. The group was listed in programs simply as "Orchestral Ensemble." Gradually it grew in size, taking on the name "National Gallery Sinfonietta," and eventually reached the size and status of a symphony orchestra. The ensemble undertakes the full range of chamber and symphonic repertoire and has frequently presented first performances of works by American composers, most notably the 1953 premiere of Charles Ives' *First Symphony* under the direction of Richard Bales.

## **JORGE MESTER**

Jorge Mester, considered by many to be one of the world's most dynamic conductors, has served as music director of the Pasadena Symphony since 1984. His previous posts include music director of the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico (1976-1979) and artistic director of the Orquesta Filarmonica de la Ciudad de Mexico (1998-2002). He is conductor laureate of the prestigious Aspen Music Festival, which he led as music director for 21 years. Mester served as director of the conducting department of the Juilliard School of Music, and, for the past few seasons, has been guest conductor at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music. He has given more than 70 world-premiere performances of works by such composers as Philip Glass, Peter Schickele, Michael Daugherty, Carl Ruggles, Joan Tower, and George Tsontakis.

An accomplished violist, Mester performed with the Beaux-Arts Quartet for several years before focusing exclusively on conducting.

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## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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